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THE MONTHLY GULL BULLETIN

AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

VOLUME 16 SAN FRANCISCO, MAY, 1934 NUMBER 5

## Behavior of Birds at Deserted Nests

Birds are said to lose interest in the nest once the family has been raised and the nest deserted. There are always exceptions to any general statement upon the behavior of birds, however. In the case of birds that nest in holes in trees or in bird boxes, there are, of course, many instances where one of a pair of birds will use the old home for a winter shelter.

A male Northwest Flicker used the bird box in which his family were raised as a winter home for himself for two winters in my yard in Seattle. Western Winter Wrens have been known to crowd into nesting boxes to the number of six or seven on cold winter nights. At a friend's on Mercer Island in Lake Washington, Western Bluebirds were observed "hanging about" the nesting box long after they had grown, going in and out as though in play and remaining nearby even after the parent birds were busy with a second nesting.

On October 9, 1932, in Berkeley, we had another opportunity to observe birds in relation to their deserted nest. For three years Bush-tits have nested in the black acacia *(acacia melanoxylon)* in the back yard, each time choosing a different part of the tree. Last year, on the above date, we decided to cut the nest of that spring down in order to find out just what materials were used in its construction. Immediately the ladder was placed near the nest, two Bush-tits appeared and kept as close as they could on a near limb, watching our every move and making just the tiniest sounds as if in protest.

Whether these very soft alarm notes were communicated to other birds or not we cannot say. But something still more odd happened. We began to take the nails out of the support to a bird house nailed to the fence. We wanted to cut the hole larger in the hope that Plain Titmice might use the box since Wrens, for which it was originally made, had never used it. Before the house was quite loose from its fastenings, two Plain Titmice appeared from nowhere. We had neither seen nor heard any about for weeks. One lit on the top of the house and the other clung to the side and poked his head in the hole. Maybe it was *her* head, I do not know. They stayed around for some time after the box was down. This spring we saw the Bush-tits, but if they built in the same acacia, we did not find their nest. The Titmice were not seen again.

Mrs. Norman C. Compton (Mary I.), Berkeley, California. October 25, 1933.

## Nesting of Guillemots

Guillemots, of which I believe there are five recognized species, are represented in the new world on the Pacific Coast by the Pigeon Guillemot, which ranges from the Behring Sea to Santa Barbara County, differing from the Black Guillemot of the Eastern coast only in having the white wing patch divided by a black bar.

Little seems to have been published on its nesting habits, probably owing to the foresight of the parent birds in placing their eggs in crevices in the rocks, although sometimes in burrows. One nest which was in a crevice in plain sight, I watched for two years.

Of the sixteen references to the number of eggs to a clutch, twelve say two; one, two and rarely three; and another, one or two. The eggs I have examined differ greatly not only in their markings but in their basic coloring.

My first meeting with the Guillemot was May 8, 1916, at Monterey. I was sitting on the edge of Fisherman's wharf, watching Eared Grebes catching sardines, when a black bird with white wing patches rose to the surface, tossed its catch in the air and showed a flaming red mouth while swallowing the fish. In diving, this bird then showed me a beautiful pair of red feet. I recognized my first Pigeon Guillemot.

From time to time I saw them from this same wharf, but it was not until May 18, 1922, on the Farallon Islands that I had the opportunity to examine a nest, and this experience was not all pleasure. By removing several rocks I was able to reach the eggs, two in number, and each time I secured an egg I received a sharp nip from the parent bird. After admiring the clutch, I returned them to the burrow, receiving the same vigorous thrust from the parent's bill, and I believe, if I were to examine another nest, I should like to choose one that held a single egg, for it was evident that the small diameter of the burrow saved me from an extremely sore hand. May 24, 1930, on the Farallon trip I did not observe this species on the island, although several adult birds were in evidence near the landing.

On June 28, 1931, near Land's End, San Francisco, several pairs were in mating antics. On July 4, it was evident that nesting was in progress on the side of the camel back rock in an open crevice. July 19, one young and one egg were observed. The last of the young left the nest between August 23 and 30.

On March 3, 1933, two Guillemots were seen near the old wreck. On May 8, there were thirty-five to forty birds present in the water nearby. Mating was in progress and the whole colony were intensively active. When a member of the colony seemed to be too closely pursued, it would dive into the ocean from the air, the pursuing bird alighting on the water awaiting its reappearance, then more diving and splashing.

May 6, 1933, the old crevice on the camel back rock was again occupied, and on June 9 there were two young; on August 20, one young, and on the 27th the crevice was empty.

These few facts leave considerable doubt in my mind and I would welcome any information on nesting and length of incubation.

Carl R. Smith, San Francisco, California. October 27, 1933.

**The April field trip** was taken on Sunday, the 15th, to Lake Merced. Our customary route through the once beautiful ravine, popularly known as "Dr. Bryant's canyon," always abundant in both land and water birds, having been destroyed in the process of highway construction, we had to choose another approach to the lake. Meeting at the entrance to the Fleishhacker playground, thirteen members and six guests visited first the pond, where almost all the common species of ducks in pairs are to be seen.

Entering the eucalyptus grove, the first interesting object was a Bush-tit's nest hanging quite low over the path. At the lake a female Mallard with nine very young ducklings swam near the shore, and later another Mallard with seven ducklings was seen. Many Eared Grebes in their mating plumage were present. Three Black-crowned Night Herons flew toward us and perched in a cypress tree.

One member watching an Allen Hummingbird saw it alight on its nest in an acacia tree. Further investigation revealed two eggs in the nest. Allen Hummingbirds were very numerous and exceedingly active. The songs of House and Purple Finches filled the air, and all day long we enjoyed the weird call of the Western Grebe.

Only three or four Rough-winged Swallows were seen, whereas on former visits we have recorded five additional species. Perhaps the most outstanding observation of the day was seven or eight Cinnamon Teal on south lake. This

species has been observed by us only once previously on our April trip in the last ten years; that record was in 1927.

Part of our group made a complete circuit of the south lake, returning to the original starting point. It was a perfect day and an enjoyable trip, although the actual number of species observed (42) was the smallest on any of our April trips to Lake Merced in several years. The following is the complete list for the day:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Eared Grebe | Coot | Audubon Warbler |
| Western Grebe | Killdeer | Yellowthroat |
| Pied-billed Grebe | Glaucous-winged Gull | Pileolated Warbler |
| Farallon Cormorant | Western Gull | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Brandt Cormorant | Mourning Dove | Brewer Blackbird |
| Great Blue Heron | Anna Hummingbird | English Sparrow |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | Allen Hummingbird | Purple Finch |
| Mallard | Flicker | House Finch |
| Baldpate | Western Flycatcher | Pine Siskin |
| Cinnamon Teal | Rough-winged Swallow | Willow Goldfinch |
| Surf Scoter | Chickadee | Spotted Towhee |
| Ruddy Duck | Bush-tit | Junco |
| Red-breasted Merganser | Tule Wren | Nuttall Sparrow |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Robin | Song Sparrow |

Albert B. Stephens, Historian.

**The April week-day trip** was taken on the 24th to Alameda and Bay Farm Island under the leadership of Mrs. G. Earle Kelly. An ideal day brought out nine members and five guests. Twelve species of shore birds were observed, with Long-billed Dowitchers predominating. Among the sandpipers were found the Red-backed, many of which showed black bellies.

In addition to shore birds a number of land birds were also seen, making in all a total of twenty-eight for the trip, as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Red-throated Loon | Long-billed Dowitcher | Horned Lark |
| Clapper Rail | Western Sandpiper | Barn Swallow |
| Snowy Plover | Marbled Godwit | Robin |
| Semipalmated Plover | Sanderling | Meadowlark |
| Killdeer | Glaucous-winged Gull | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Black-bellied Plover | Herring Gull | Brewer Blackbird |
| Long-billed Curlew | Ring-billed Gull | English Sparrow |
| Hudsonian Curlew | Bonaparte Gull | Bryant Savannah Sparrow |
| Western Willet | Forster Tern | Alameda Salt Marsh Sparrow |
| Red-backed Sandpiper | | |

## Early Dates for Summer Visitants

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cliff Swallow | Oakland Scout Camp | March 4 | Robert Taylor |
| Warbling Vireo | Oakland Scout Camp | March 16 | Robert Taylor |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | Oakland Scout Camp | March 17 | Robert Taylor |
| Pileolated Warbler | Oakland Scout Camp | March 18 | Robert Taylor |
| Western Flycatcher | Oakland Scout Camp | March 26 | Robert Taylor |
| Black-headed Grosbeak | San Anselmo | April 6 | Mrs. Otis H. Smith |
| Bullock Oriole | San Anselmo | April 6 | Mrs. Otis H. Smith |

## Audubon Notes

**May Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 11th, at 8 p. m., room 19, Ferry Building.

The speaker of the evening will be Dr. V. W. von Hagen, who will tell us something of the Darwin Memorial Expedition to the Galapagos Islands, which he is to lead. He will also describe various phases of animal and bird life found there.

**May Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to St. Mary's, Contra Costa County. San Francisco members will take 8 a. m. Key Route Ferry and Sacramento Northern Railway train. East Bay members may take train at Fortieth Street and Shafter Avenue at 8:30 a. m. Purchase round-trip tickets to St. Mary's; fare from San Francisco 75c, from Oakland 50c. Bring luncheon and filled canteens. Joseph J. Webb, leader.

**Week Day Trip** will be taken on Thursday, the 17th, to University of California campus, Berkeley. Take the 9:15 Southern Pacific boat and train to University Avenue, walk to Oxford Street, where party will meet at 10 o'clock. Bring luncheon. Leader, Mrs. H. P. Bracelin.

**Livermore:** Tentative plans are being made for an extra trip to be taken on Sunday, May 27, to McCoy's Ranch, Livermore. The trip will be made in a Gray Line bus, provided enough members express their desire to go. The rates are as follows: for a party of 25, $1.75 each; 33, $1.55 each; and 50, $1.20 each. This trip will be for members only. Those wishing to take advantage of this opportunity will kindly send a postal to Mr. Joseph J. Webb, 519 California Street, San Francisco, as soon as possible so that final arrangements can be completed.

**April Meeting:** The 201st regular meeting was held on April 12, in room 19, Ferry Building, with forty-six members and guests present. President Joseph J. Webb in the chair.

The following observations were reported:

John Cushing, Jr.: Inverness, February 10, pair of Spotted Owls.

Eddie McClintock: Moraga, April 7, Cowbird.

Commander Parmenter: San Mateo Bridge, March 13, fifty-three Least Terns.

Mrs. Otis H. Smith: Ross, March 7, Lutescent Warbler; 18th, Pileolated Warbler; April 12, San Anselmo, White-throated Sparrow.

Mrs. Albert B. Stephens: North Lake, Golden Gate Park, April 7, Greater Yellow-legs, a record for the park.

Robert Taylor: Oakland Scout Camp. February 28, Allen Hummingbird: March 16, Hermit Warbler; April 1, Rufous Hummingbird.

Dr. Carl S. Duncan delivered a very instructive talk on insects. In addition to the many interesting phases of this subject presented by the speaker, the importance of insects to bird life was stressed.


## Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

**For the Study and the Protection of Birds**

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Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

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Subscription to monthly Bulletin, $1.00 per year. Single copies, 15c.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, $3.00 per year.

Student memberships, $1.50 per year. Life memberships, $50.00

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.